

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 877

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, JO, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI LAND PURCHASE POLICY FOR WEST BANK

SUMMARY: DESPITE CONTROLS THAT APPEAR LIKELY TO BE INCLUDED IN ANY COMPROMISE FORMULA ON LAND SALES, NET EFFECT OF ANY NEW POLICY WILL BE TO FACILITATE AND HENCE INCREASE JEWISH BUYING IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. THIS IS PURPOSE OF WHOLE EXERCISE, AND INCREASINGLY PROPRIETARY ATTITUDE IN ISRAEL TOWARD WEST BANK WILL TEND TO ENSURE THAT POLICY OPERATES TO THIS EFFECT. ARAB REACTION TO CONTINUING EVIDENCE OF ISRAELI AGGRANDIZEMENT IS INCREASED CONVICTION OF ISRAEL'S INTENTIONS TO TAKE OVER WEST BANK. END SUMMARY

1. PRESS REPORTING HAS SO FAR BEEN VAGUE ON FORMULA BEING WORKED OUT WITHIN LABOR LEADERSHIP TO COVER ISRAELI LAND PURCHASES IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. ALL COMPROMISE PROPOSALS TO DATE HAVE BEEN BASED ON SAME GENERAL CONCEPT, HOWEVER: THAT PURCHASING FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES OR INDIVIDUALS BE DONE BY OR UNDER CLOSE CONTROL OF OFFICIAL BODY. PRESUMABLY FINAL COMPROMISE, IF ONE IS REACHED, WILL EMBODY THIS CONCEPT INSOMRE FORM.

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2. THIS IS BETTER THAN THROWING OPEN GATES TO PRIVATE SPECULA-

TION, BUT PARTICULARLY IN CLIMATE OF OPINION DEVELOPING IN ISRAEL ABOUT WEST BANK IT COULD STILL LEAD TO SUBSTANTIAL INROADS ON ARAB LANDS. WE HAVE IMPRESSION THAT OVER PAST MONTHS, AS DEBATE ON TERRITORIES HAS PROCEEDED, TWO THEMES HAVE OCCURRED MORE FREQUENTLY IN PRESS AND IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION: FIRST, THAT WEST BANK IS FUNDAMENTALLY ISRAELI, ON WELL-KNOWN HISTORICAL GROUNDS, AND THAT ANY RETURN OF PORTIONS OF IT TO JORDAN WOULD BE GENEROUS CONCESSION IN INTEREST OF PEACE; AND SECOND, THAT IT IS ABSURDLY UNJUST TO ARGUE THAT OTHERS MAY BUY LAND IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA BUT THAT JEWS, OF ALL PEOPLE, SHOULD BE PROHIBITED FROM DOING SO.

3. PARTICULARLY IF PUBLIC DOES COME INCREASINGLY TO HOLD THESE VIEWS, ANY AUTHORITY CONTROLLING LAND PURCHASES UNDER LIBERALIZED REGIME WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY COME UNDER GREAT PRESSURE TO TAKE POSITIVE APPROACH. THIS WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO RESIST, SINCE DAYAN AND COMPANY COULD BE EXPECTED TO REMIND THOSE CONCERNED THAT NEW ARRANGEMENT WAS AGREED ON PRECISELY TO MAKE POSSIBLE MORE LAND PURCHASES. OTHERWISE THERE WAS NO REASON TO CHANGE EXISTING SYSTEM. NORMAL PRESSURES FROM BIG MONEY AND HIGH INFLUENCE WOULD NO DOUBT ALSO OPERATE. IN THIS LAND OF THE FAIL ACCOMPLI, PRACTICE OF NEGOTIATING SALE FIRST AND GETTING PERMISSION LATER WOULD LIKELY PERSIST. PURCHASERS NOW HOLDING POWERS OF ATTORNEY TO REGISTER ILLEGAL ACQUISITIONS WOULD BE FIRST IN LINE.

4. THERE IS SOME DIFFERENCE OF VIEW AMONG LEADING ARABS AS TO WILLINGNESS OF ARAB LANDOWNERS TO SELL (FOR ARAB TO EXPRESS CONCERN ON THIS POINT IS TO CAST ZYDSOXON ARAB ATTACHMENT TO LAND, WHICH IS ARTICLE OF FAITH, HOWEVER TATTEREF). THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE OF VIEW, THOUGH, ABOUT END RESULT OF FURTHER SETTLEMENTS, EXPANSION OF PRESENT SETTLEMENTS (APPARENTLY OCCURRING NOW AT GUSH ETZION--JERUSALEM A-081), LAND SEIZURES AND PURCHASES, ETC. AUGUST 14 EL QUDS EDITORIAL EXPRESSED IT NEATLY IN EDITORIAL HEADLINE

"ISLANDS WHICH WILL SWALLOW UP THE OCEAN." EL QUDS HAD REFERENCE PARTICULARLY TO AUGUST 13 ANNOUNCEMENT BY GOI INTERIOR MINISTER OF PLANS FOR REGIONAL COUNCILS WHICH WOULD LINK SETTLEMENTS ADMINISTRATIVELY WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH ADJACENT COMMUNITIES IN ISRAEL. THIS APPEARED TO THE PAPER TO PRESAGE CONSOLIDATION OF ISRAELI FOOTHOLD IN TERRITORIES AND

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AMALGAMATION WITH ADJACENT ISRAELI AREAS.

5. REGARDING SALE OF LAND, THREE OF OUR ARAB ACQUAINTANCES HAVE POINTED FINGER PARTICULARLY AT CHRISTIAN ARABS FROM TOWNS NEAR JERUSALEM WHO HAVE EMIGRATED TO US OR LATIN AMERICA. MAYOR OF ONE SUCH TOWN, BEIT JALLA, TOLD US OF CASE IN WHICH JEWISH BUYER WENT TO LATIN AMERICA AND COMPLETED DEAL FOR PURCHASE OF 50 DUNUMS. FORMER JERUSALEM GOVERNOR ANWAR KHATIB AND RAMALLAH

MAYOR KHALLAF CONFIRMED THAT THESE EMIGRANTS WERE MAJOR ELEMENT IN SALES PICTURE. MAY OWN LAND, AND UNDER ISRAELI RULE THEY CANNOT COME BACK TO LIVE FOR A PERIOD AS THEY MIGHT ONCE HAVE DONE; HENCE THEY SELL.

6. COMMENT: SOME WEEKS AGO ONE OF ISRAEL'S LEADING JOURNALISTS, ESHED OF DAVAR, SET OUT REVEALING RATIONALE FOR CURRENT ISRAELI WEST BANK POLICY. ARGUMENT, WHICH HE SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED IN CONVERSATION WITH US, OPPOSED IDEA OF FIXING LIMITS FOR ISRAELI TERRITORIAL REQUIREMENTS IN OCCUPIED AREAS. WHERE WOULD WE BE TODAY, HE ASKED, IF WE HAD FIXED LIMITS IN 1948? EACH STAGE OF ISRAEL'S EXISTENCE HAS BEEN TRANSITIONAL. THAT IS TRUE TODAY AS WELL. ESHED ALSO MADE INTERESTING POINT THAT UNDER DAYAN CONCEPT ARAB INHABITANTS WOULD BE LIVING IN A SENSE AS FOREIGN RESIDENTS IN TERRITORIES. HE WENT ON TO WONDER HOW LONG THEY WOULD CONTINUE TO LIVE THERE UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. THIS PARALLELS REASONING OF MANY OF OUR ARAB ACQUAINTANCES WHO CONTEND THAT ULTIMATE ISRAELI AIM IS TO INDUCE ARABS TO LEAVE WEST BANK.
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